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ABSTRACT

Most researchers explain the attractiveness-personality link in terms of a simple self-fulfilling prophecy model: a person's good looks evoke a "Beauty is Good" stereotype that causes positive treatment by others, which, in turn, causes the target to develop a "good personality." An alternative conceptual framework expands on the current implicit model of the relationship between physical beauty and personality by considering the content of the physical attractiveness stereotype. This study assessed the relationship between males' and females' attractiveness and personality traits varying in degree of psychological connectedness to appearance. Subjects included 243 female and 160 male college students. Subjects were rated on physical attractiveness by four raters and responded to a personality characteristics questionnaire. The results indicated that the link between looks and personality was weak and specific. A multicomponented conceptualization of the Beauty is Good stereotype, with content areas differing in strength of inferential relatedness to attractiveness, did not completely account for actual personality differences between individuals of high and low attractiveness. Attractive people scored higher on measures of Social Competence and Achievement, the content domain most strongly inferentially linked to looks. In addition, it was found that physical attractiveness has differential impacts on the development of male and female personalities, with good looking males in particular demonstrating that "What is Beautiful" can also be quite unattractive. (ABL)

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The Relationship Between Looks and Personality: Strong and General or Content Specific?

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Although folk wisdom holds that "beauty is only skin deep" and cautions that one should not "judge a book by its cover," the prominent German philosopher Schiller wrote, "physical beauty is a sign of interior beauty, a spiritual and moral beauty" (1882). The accumulated social scientific research on the relationship between outward beauty (i.e., "good looks") and inward beauty (i.e., positive personality traits) tends to support Schiller, although as indicated below, there is far from unanimous agreement regarding the extent to which personality varies with attractiveness. On the other hand, most social scientists would agree that Schiller's implicit causal model in which internal beauty apparently "causes" external beauty is not an adequate explanation of this covariation. Rather, most researchers would explain the attractiveness-personality link in terms of a simple self-fulfilling prophecy model: A person's good looks evoke a Beauty is Good stereotype that causes positive treatment by others, which, in turn, causes the target to develop a "good personality."

This paper is organized as follows: First, the literature addressing the relationship between appearance and personality characteristics is briefly reviewed, followed by a critique that emphasizes the lack of theory in most extant work. In the next section, an alternative conceptual framework is proposed that expands on the current implicit model of the relationship between physical beauty and personality by considering the content of the physical attractiveness stereotype. Following that, a study designed to address the basic assumptions of the new framework will be described and the findings will be discussed.

In terms of conducting research, study of the relationship between one's appearance and one's personality has generated a fair amount of research interest. Some investigators have attempted to assess this link in a rather broad-based fashion. For example, fifteen years ago, and among the first to assess the looks-personality link, Krebs and Adinolfi (1975) administered a battery of personality inventories to physically attractive and physically unattractive students "in order to test the validity of the traits observers attribute to them" (p. 246). Other researchers more often focus on a smaller number of "selected personality correlates of attractiveness" (Cash & Smith, 1982, p.185). Despite the scope of their assessments, most investigations of the appearance-personality relationship are not derived from or deemed necessary by theory. As Bull and Rumsey (1988) put it "..the majority of

research has been so unsystematic and so atheoretical as possibly to preclude worthwhile answers" (p. 4).

Consequently, attempts at interpreting and summarizing this area have provided few insights about the link of physical attractiveness to personality. An analysis of four major and recent reviews of studies on the physcial attractiveness-personality relationship (Kennedy, 1989) revealed that, although the reviewers agree that there are actual personality differences between attractive and unattractive individuals, they often do not agree as to what the personality differences are. Thus, some reviewers conclude that the link between attractiveness and personality is strong and general, with "good looking" people having globally good personalities and their less well endowed compatriots possessing relatively negative qualities. For example, Patzer (1985) states, "The data have identified personality variations as a function of higher and lower physical attractiveness...a strong relationship does exist between external physical attractiveness of an individual and the person's inner cognitive concepts" (p. 127). Other reviewers (e.g., Bull and Rumsey, 1988) would argue that this link is much weaker.

A major flaw in the physical appearance-personality outcome literature is the lack of an explicit guiding framework. Although seldom fully articulated by physical attractiveness workers, the implicit explanatory model suggests that the link of looks to personality is simple and direct: (1) Target attractiveness activates a Beauty is Good stereotype in the perceiver. (2) This leads the perceiver to make positive assumptions about the target's personality, which, in turn, (3) results in positive behaviors by the perceiver toward the attractive (compared with an unattractive) person. (4) As a consequence of repeatedly receiving differing social reactions by multiple others, individuals of varying levels of attractiveness internalize differential treatments so that positive responses translate into positive personalities in the good looking and negative treatment by others translates into negative personalities in unattractive people. As it currently stands, this implicit guiding model is too simple because it fails to specify precisely WHICH expectations will lead, via a self-fulfilling prophecy, to the development of WHAT specific stereotype-related traits.

This lack of specificity stems, at least in part, from the fact that most researchers testing the attractiveness stereotype have treated it as homogeneous. More specifically, most workers in this area

have assumed that the content of the attractiveness stereotype is "all good things." This assumption implies that the stereotype has only evaluative contents, and, more importantly, ignores the possibility that there are different types of evaluation not all of which are inferentially linked to beauty to the same degree. There are, however, conceptual and empirical grounds to treat the physical attractiveness stereotype as heterogeneous, with different types of content having varying degrees of psychological connectedness to appearance.

The conceptual grounds are based on Ashmore and Del Boca's (1979; see also Ashmore, Del Boca, & Wohlers, 1986) suggestions that stereotypes can be conceptualized in terms of the person perception construct "implicit personality theory (IPT)." The basic components of IPT are the personal attributes ("traits" or "attributes of personality") that a person believes others to have, and the "inferential relations" between these attributes. Ashmore and Del Boca (1979) successfully used the major implicit personality theory methodologies in the study of sex stereotypes and discovered that certain dimensions of personality perception were differentially associated with male versus female targets. The crucial point of their approach for the looks-personality outcome literature is that personality attributes in a stereotype vary from highly associated to not at all associated with the social category in question.

In terms of potential categorization of such attributes, research by Rosenberg and his colleagues (Rosenberg, Nelson, & Vivekananthan, 1968; Rosenberg, 1977; Rosenberg & Jones, 1972; Kim and Rosenberg, 1980) has shown that, in people's Implicit Personality Theories, the Evaluative continuum is partitioned into multiple content-specific components. Multidimensional scaling (Rosenberg et al., 1968) and content analysis (Kim and Rosenberg, 1980) of open-ended self and other-descriptions have provided evidence for the following specific evaluative sub-dimensions: Intellectual Competence, Social Competence, Maturity, Psychological Adjustment, Integrity, Concern for Others, and Physical Attractiveness.

In addition to the conceptual rationale that the physical attractiveness stereotype may be multicomponented, there is empirical evidence that certain content-specific personality domains vary more strongly and directly with attractiveness than others. Within the Beauty is Good stereotype paradigm, several workers have suggested that the core of the attractiveness stereotype is a particular

type of social goodness which Bassili (1981) terms "social vitality" and Dion (1981, 1986) labels "Social competence and interpersonal ease." Adams (1975) has indicated that the physical attractiveness stereotype is particularly strong when individuals are asked to evaluate stimulus persons on measures such as social competency and social desirability.

The most compelling empirical evidence is provided by a recent meta-analytic review of the physical attractiveness stereotype literature conducted by Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, and Kennedy (1989). The dependent variables from each study of the Beauty is Good stereotype were classified into slightly modified versions of the evaluative sub-dimensions identified by Rosenberg and his colleagues. Calculations of mean weighted effect sizes revealed that the Social Competence and Achievement content domain is more strongly related to good vs. bad looks than the Psychological Adjustment, Potency, and Intellectual Competence content areas (which showed moderate effect sizes) and also the Integrity and Concern for Others domains (with effect sizes near 0). Additionally, this meta-analysis revealed that the physical attractiveness stereotype did not differ for male and female targets.

If, as many social psychologists imply, the self-fulfilling prophecy is the causal mechanism behind the appearance-personality covariation, then a multicomponented conceptualization of the Beauty is Good stereotype would predict the following about the link of looks to personality: The relationship should not be strong and general overall (because the stereotype itself is not strong and general). When the strength of the inferential link between attractiveness and content domain is strong (e.g., Social Competence), attractiveness should prompt consistent expectations and treatment by others. Consequently, those content areas with the strongest inferential links to beauty should be more consistently represented by actual personality differences than content areas less strongly associated with beauty. In sharp contrast, the more simple implict model, based on a homogeneous conception of the Beauty is Good stereotype, would predict that good looking individuals will have more positive scores on any and all evaluative aspects of personality.

To test these predictions, a study designed to assess the relationship between males' and females' attractiveness and personality traits varying in degree of psychological connectedness to appearance, was conducted.

The Jackson Personality Inventory (JPI; Jackson, 1976) was selected as the dependent measure in this study because a review of personality assessment instruments revealed that this measure contained three subscales that best operationalized personality traits located within content domains that were strongly, moderately, and weakly inferentially linked to attractiveness. More specifically, the JPI assesses characteristics within the Social Competence and Achievement, Intellectual Competence and Achievement, and Concern for Others categories.

Eagly and her colleagues (1989) describe the core of the Social Competence category as those intepersonal skills and traits concerned with sociability, as well as the outcomes of such skills and inclinations. The JPI Social Participation scale is a very good fit to this construct. The intellectual competence category centers on intellectual and task-relevant ability, and the results of such ability and motivation. This category also encompasses a hard and rational mental style. The Organization scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory was used as an index of this group of characteristics. The Concern for Others content domain is described as having both positive and negative components. The positive aspect of Concern for Others refers to being emotionally supportive as well as sensitive and generous. On the negative side are characteristics such as egotistical and vain. The JPI Interpersonal Affect scale was quite consistent with the positive side of the Concern for Others domain.

The six content domains utilized in the meta-analysis of the beauty is good stereotype are underlined in column 1 of Table 1. Beneath these categories, in bold print, are the three Jackson Personality Inventory scales discussed above plus the remaining 13 JPI scales. The second column contains the mean weighted effect sizes associated with the six content domains. Larger numbers indicate stronger inferential relationships between the category and physical attractiveness. The content categories and the JPI scales nested within them are organized in decreasing order of inferential relatedness to attractiveness.

Method

Two hundred and forty-three female and one hundred and sixty male Rutgers University introductory psychology students received partial course credit for participation in a study entitled "Appearance and Personality." Participants were run in same-sex groups of approximately 30. As

each subject entered the research laboratory, he or she was given a folder containing various questionnaires including the one central to the present investigation, The Jackson Personality Inventory. In order to systematically obtain attractiveness ratings, participants were informed that a second group of subjects would be entering the room immediately after their session. They were told that due to confusion that had occurred in a previous session, it would be appreciated if they would bring their folder up to the front table where each of four assistants (2 male and 2 female) would check to make sure all the questionnaires had been completed. At this point in the session each subject was independently rated by the 4 assistants on global physical attractiveness along a 1 to 9 continuum.

Results

To determine whether the physical attractiveness stereotype may have differential effects on the personality development of males versus females, all analyses were performed separately for each sex. Correlations were calculated between average physical attractiveness rating and each of the 16 scales on the Jackson Personality Inventory. In addition, t-tests comparing the means of the extreme groups of participants were performed on each scale.

The range of attractiveness ratings for male targets was more restricted than that for females, therefore, using the same cut-off points in the male and female samples resulted in different size groups. Selecting participants who were rated above 6.75 and below 3.75 resulted in 32 extremely attractive and 32 extremely unattractive females, but only 15 attractive and 10 unattractive males. All analyses were calculated with both this smaller, extreme group of males and also with a sample of males that approximately equaled the extreme females in number, but consequently included 45 participants with ratings that were less extreme. The attractive males in this larger, less extreme sample received an average attractiveness rating of 6.25 or higher, while the cut-off point for the unattractive males was 4.25.

Table 1 contains the results of correlational analyses with all females (n=243), extreme females (n=64), all males (n=160), the larger of the two identified extremely attractive and unattractive male groups (n=59), and the most extreme males (n=25). Discussion of the results, however, will focus only on analyses involving the most extreme groups of males and females (n=25 and n=64,

respectively). This data is found in the second of the two columns for females and in the third of the three columns for male participants.

The correlation coefficients in these two columns reveal that the link between attractiveness and personality is not strong and general. The size of the correlation coefficients vary considerably in absolute value (i.e., from r=.017 to r=.489) and only three traits for each sex are significantly correlated with looks (i.e., Social Participation, Self Esteem and Tolerance for females, and Breadth of Interest, Tolerance and Values for males).

Focusing just on the three preselected Jackson Personality Inventory Scales (Social Participation, Organization, and Interpersonal Affect), the pattern of rs for male participants is as predicted. That is, The correlation coefficient between appearance and scores on Social Participation is larger than that for Organization, which, in turn, is larger than the Interpersonal Affect correlation. For females, the correlation between attractiveness and Social Participation scores is largest, but the r for Organization is not greater than that for Interpersonal Affect.

Thus, some support is provided for the hypothesis that the strength of the actual looks-personality relationship will vary with the strength of inferential association. That a significant r for females and a marginally significant correlation for males between looks and the Social Participation measure was found, provides the strongest support for our hypothesis that characteristics most strongly inferentially linked to attractiveness will be reflected in true personality differences.

However, an analysis of the overall patterns of data in these columns reveals that the correlation coefficients do not decrease in magnitude directly with the decreases in mean weighted effect size. Consequently, although the homogeneous stereotype-based notion that beauty translates into globally good personalities can be ruled out, it cannot be concluded that personality differences between the attractive and the unattractive will vary directly with strength of inferential relatedness to looks.

A myriad of possible factors could be discussed as reasons why the results did not turn out exactly as anticipated. Perhaps one of the most obvious is that the self-fulfilling prophecy has been relied upon as the sole explanatory mechanism. It is probably naive to assume that the only input into

personality development is treatment by others based on one's appearance. Rather than focusing on possible causal explanations or mechanisms, the remainder of this paper discusses the specific findings relevant to addressing the question "how do attractive males and females differ from their unattractive counterparts?"

Table 2 contains the Jackson Personality Inventory descriptions of those traits on which the means of the attractive and unattractive groups were found to significantly differ. In females, the extremely good looking score significantly higher on measures of Social Participation ($t[62]=2.63$, $p<.01$) and Self Esteem ($t[64]=2.05$, $p<.05$) and significantly lower on the Tolerance scale ($t[64]=-2.59$, $p<.01$). As indicated in Table 2, the Jackson Personality Inventory Self Esteem scale assesses a very social and self-presentational aspect of self-esteem. It is clearly a measure of self-confidence and assuredness in interpersonal situations and, as such, is also very representative of Social Competence and Achievement characteristics. In terms of Tolerance scores, the finding that attractive females can be opinionated, uncompromising individuals is consistent with, and conceptually very similar to the "dark side" of the physical attractiveness stereotype (i.e., Beauty is egotistical, self-centered, and unsympathetic) identified by researchers in this area (e.g., Dermer & Thiel, 1975). Thus, the results of this study find attractive women to be sociable, outgoing, and composed, but also intolerant and prejudiced.

Turning to the males, we find that the attractive men scored higher on the JPI Social Participation ($t[23]=1.96$, $p<.06$) and Values scales ($t[23]=2.52$, $p<.02$), and lower on Breadth of Interest ($t[23]=-1.94$, $p<.06$), Complexity ($t[23]=-1.68$, $p<.10$), and Tolerance ($t[23]=-2.56$, $p<.02$) scales. As can be seen in Table 2, except for the relationship between attractiveness and Social Participation, the pattern of personality outcome data for the males (compared with the females) presents an even uglier picture of good looks. Using JPI defining adjectives of high and low scorers, it is the case that as males increase in physical attractiveness they are more likely to be inflexible, narrow, unreflective, intolerant, uncompromising, moralistic, prudish, and righteous.

While others have acknowledged an egotistical or self-centered "dark side" of the physical attractiveness stereotype, the present results indicate that in terms of actual personality traits, this dark side may more broad-based than initially thought, and may be more strongly related to male

attractiveness than female beauty. This finding contradicts some investigators' suggestions that "good looks may produce fairly uniform benefits for men" (Cash & Smith, 1982, p. 185). In addition, the finding that females' good looks are related to fewer personality traits than males' also runs counter to literature indicating that the effects of attractiveness may be more consequential for women than men (see, for example, Patzer, 1985).

In summary, the present data clearly indicate that the link between looks and personality is weak and specific. A multicomponented conceptualization of the Beauty is Good stereotype, with content areas differing in strength of inferential relatedness to attractiveness, did not completely account for actual personality differences between individuals of high and low attractiveness. That this framework shows promise, however, is revealed in the finding that attractive people scored higher on measures of Social Competence and Achievement, the content domain most strongly inferentially linked to looks. In addition, it was found that physical attractiveness has differential impacts on the development of male and female personalities, with good looking males in particular demonstrating that "What is Beautiful" can also be quite unattractive.

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Table 1. The Physical Attractiveness-Personality Relationship

Content Domain / JPI Trait	Mean Weighted Effect Size	Females r (n=243)	Females r (N=64)	Males r (N=160)	Males r (N=59)	Males r (N=25)
Social Competence & Achievement	(.68)					
Social Participation		.112	**.329****	.108	.248x	**.377x**
Self Esteem		.126*	.245*	.130	.199	.329
Social Adroitness		.051	.126	.033	.041	-.073
Conformity		.118	.182	.094	.117	.118
Adjustment	(.52)					
Anxiety		.137*	.176	-.016	-.044	.149
Potency	(.49)					
Energy Level		.067	.060	.135	.224	.207
Risk Taking		-.059	-.102	.030	.020	-.256
Intellectual Competence & Achievement	(.46)					
Organization		.102	**.117**	.049	.140	**.263**
Breadth of Interest		-.048	-.109	-.074	-.158	-.410*
Complexity		-.077	-.150	-.016	-.095	-.377x
Innovation		-.102	-.197	-.032	-.103	-.116
Integrity	(.13)					
Responsibility		-.081	-.135	-.018	-.014	.017
Concern for Others	(.01)					
Interpersonal Affect		.110	**.188**	.019	-.030	**-.066**
Tolerance		-.156*	-.273*	-.185*	-.274*	-.487**
Values		.012	-.040	.139	.239x	.489**
Infrequency		.015	.117	.117	.158	.057

xp<.06
*p<.05
**p<.01

Table 2. Jackson Personality Inventory Descriptions of High and Low Scorers on Traits Significantly Differentiating High vs. Low Attractive Individuals

ATTRACTIVE FEMALES	UNATTRACTIVE FEMALES
Social Participation:	
Will eagerly join a variety of social groups; seeks both formal and informal association with others; values positive interpersonal relationships; actively social. --Sociable, friendly, gregarious, outgoing, "joiner", convivial, companionable, cordial, good-natured.	Keeps to herself; has few friends; avoids social activities. --Nonparticipant, solitary, "loner," unsociable, retiring, uncommunicative, withdrawn.
Self Esteem:	
Confident in dealing with others; not easily embarassed or influenced by others; shows presence in interpersonal situations; possesses aplomb. --Self-assured, composed, egotistical, self-possessed, poised, self-sufficient.	Feels awkward among people, especially strangers; ill at ease socially; prefers to remain unnoticed at social events; has low opinion of herself as a group member; lacks self-confidence; easily embarassed. --Self-depreciating, timid, unassuming, modest, shy, humble, self-conscious.
Tolerance:	
Entertains only opinions consistent with her own; makes quick value judgments about others; feels threatened by those with different opinions; rejects people from different ethnic, religious, cultural or social backgrounds; identifies closely with those sharing her beliefs. --Intolerant, cocksure, dogmatic, opinionated, narrow-minded, prejudiced, uncompromising.	Accepts people even though their beliefs and customs may differ from her own; open to new ideas; free from prejudice; welcomes dissent. --Broadminded, open-minded, unprejudiced, receptive, judicious, impartial, dispassionate, lenient, indulgent.
ATTRACTIVE MALES	**UNATTRACTIVE MALES**
Social Participation:	
Same as Above	Same as Above
Breadth of Interest:	
Has narrow range of interest, remains uninterested when exposed to new activities; has few hobbies; confined tastes. --Inflexible, unobservant, narrow, insular, uninvestigative.	Is attentive and involved; motivated to participate in a wide variety of activities; interested in learning about a diversity of things. --Curious, interested, inquiring, involved, inquisitive, seeking, exploring.
Complexity:	
Prefers concrete to abstract interpretations; avoids contemplative thought; uninterested in probing for new insight. --Uncomplicated, unreflective, straightforward, predictable, matter-of-fact.	Seeks intricate solutions to problems; is impatient with oversimplification; is interested in pursuing topics in depth regardless of their difficulty; enjoys abstract thought; enjoys intricacy. --Complex, contemplative, clever, discerning, intellectual, thoughtful, analytical.
Tolerance:	
Same as Above	Same as Above
Values:	
Values traditional customs and beliefs; his values may be seen by others as "old fashioned;" takes a rather conservative view regarding contemporary standards of behavior; opposed to change in social customs. --Moralistic, conventional, strict, prim, devout, prudish, puritanical, righteous, rigid.	Critical of tradition; liberal or radical attitudes regarding behavior; questions laws and precedents; acts in an unconventional manner; believes that few things should be censored. --Modern, radical, liberal, unorthodox, contemporary, permissive.